

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the claims as follows:

1. (Currently Amended) A processing method of processing a glass base material for an optical fiber using a processing apparatus, the processing apparatus including:
 - a pair of rotatable chucks [[that]] configured to directly or indirectly grasp respective ends of the glass base material in an axial direction of the glass base material and that are capable of performing to perform relative displacement in an opposing direction;
 - a burner for heating the glass base material that is movable along the axial direction of the glass base material being grasped ; and
 - at least one midway holding device ~~that holds or supports~~ configured to hold or support at least one midway part of the glass base material, the processing method comprising:
 - processing the glass base material while preventing the glass base material from being brought into a cantilever state by always holding or supporting the glass base material at two or more points; and
 - moving the at least one midway holding device aside to a vicinity of at least one rotatable chuck in an elongation process and not during a first phase of heating of the elongation process so as not to hold or support the at least one midway part.
2. (Cancelled.)
3. (Previously Presented) The processing method according to Claim 1, wherein at least one of two or more points, at which the glass base material is held or supported, comprises a midway part of the glass base material.
4. (Previously Presented) The processing method according to claim 1, wherein the glass base material is held at two or more midway parts.
5. (Withdrawn – Previously Presented) A processing apparatus that processes a glass

base material for an optical fiber, the processing apparatus comprising:

a pair of rotatable chucks that directly or indirectly grasp respective ends of the glass base material in an axial direction of the glass base material and that are capable of performing relative displacement in an opposing direction;

a burner for heating the glass base material that is movable along the axial direction of the glass base material being grasped; and

at least one midway holding device that holds or supports a midway part of the glass base material.

6. (Withdrawn) The processing apparatus according to Claim 5, wherein a supporting mechanism of a holing part provided for the midway holding device has an absorption mechanism that absorbs power from the glass base material.

7. (Withdrawn) The processing apparatus according to Claim 6, wherein the absorption mechanism includes a spring or an air cylinder for receiving load from the glass base material.

8. (Withdrawn) The processing apparatus according to claim 5, wherein the holding part includes a heat resistant roller.

9. (Withdrawn) The processing apparatus according to Claim 8, wherein the heat resistant roller is a roller made of carbon.

10. (Withdrawn) The processing apparatus according to Claim 5, wherein the midway holding part is movable along the axial direction of the glass base material being grasped.

11. (Cancelled.)

12. (Previously Presented) The processing method according to claim 3, wherein the glass base material is held at two or more midway parts.

13. (Withdrawn) The processing apparatus according to claim 6, wherein the holding part includes a heat resistant roller.

14. (Withdrawn) The processing apparatus according to claim 7, wherein the holding part includes a heat resistant roller.

15. (Previously Presented) The processing method according to claim 1, further comprising:

using the at least one midway holding device to hold or support the at least one midway part of the glass base material in a welding process before the elongation process.

16. (Previously Presented) The processing method according to claim 1, further comprising:

using the at least one midway holding device to hold or support the at least one midway part of the glass base material in a spindle shape process after the elongation process.

17. (Previously Presented) The processing method according to claim 1, further comprising:

using the at least one midway holding device to hold or support the at least one midway part of the glass base material in a welding process before the elongation process; and

using the at least one midway holding device to hold or support the at least one midway part of the glass base material in a spindle shape process after the elongation process.

18. (Currently Amended) The processing method according to claim 1, further comprising:

moving the at least one midway holding device aside to the vicinity of the at least one rotatable chuck in a flame polishing process.

19. (Previously Presented) The processing method according to claim 1, wherein the processing apparatus further comprises:

a movable headstock that comprises one of a pair of rotatable chucks and that is movable along the axial direction of the glass tube material,

wherein the at least one midway holding device is movable along the axial direction of the glass base material independently from a movement of the movable headstock.